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The Honorable Linton F. Brooks
Administrator - National Nuclear Security Administration
Forrestal Building
1000 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Administrator Brooks,

I am writing to seek clarification on the Reliable Replacement Warhead program, a new initiative that you are proposing in the fiscal year 2006 budget and that, if funded, could potentially have a significant impact on the nuclear enterprise.

As you know the FY 2005 Energy and Water conference report gave little guidance for the program per se other than state that "The conferees do not provide \$9,000,000 for advanced concepts research on new weapons designs, but the same amount is made available for the Reliable Replacement Warhead program to improve the reliability, longevity, and certifiability of existing weapons and their components."

It was clear however in the bill that with the elimination of funds for the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator and Advanced Concepts, the Congress rejects any and all efforts to design new nuclear weapons, modify existing warheads for new missions, or support efforts that might precipitate a return to live testing. Furthermore, Congress had previously defined what would constitute a new nuclear weapon in Public Law 107-314, the FY2003 National Defense Authorization Act, section 3143, subsection (d).

Mindful of the combination of support in Congress for efforts to maintain a strong nuclear deterrent but opposition to either development of new weapons and the resumption of nuclear testing, I would like you to answer these questions:

- What is the purpose of the RRW study funded in 06? How much will it cost in the outyears?
- If RRW is a variation on current Life Extension Programs (LEPs), what is wrong with existing LEPs? Have there been actual problems with Life Extension Programs, or is the Reliable Replacement Warhead being pursued in anticipation of future problems? You mention in your statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee on April 4th that the latter are "both difficult and costly"? When was this determined? Why have we been funding LEPs every year? Why

are they not being improved to better meet their mission of refurbishing the stockpile? If Congress provides funds for RRW, will we see a reduction in funds for or complete elimination of LEPs?

- In the same statement, you say that “we can count on increasing uncertainty in the long-term certification of warheads in the stockpile?” What are you basing this comment on? Is it not true that we are learning more about issues in our nuclear arsenal through the stockpile stewardship program and tools like the National Ignition Facility and DART or reinterpretation of old test data?
- While you stress that you are still supportive of the US ban on nuclear testing, your discussion of new designs for components in the RRW program sounds as if you are considering moving away from designs that have been validated by past underground nuclear testing. Do you see any circumstance under which the very work pursued under the RRW would move us away from well tested parameter ranges and encourage a resumption of testing?
- In your statement you describe a future nuclear infrastructure where a transformational RRW program will allow for a more responsive nuclear enterprise and a smaller nuclear stockpile. Yet, later in your statement you observe that “Until we achieve this responsive infrastructure, we will need to retain a substantial number of non-deployed warheads.” Not only do you see the need for a long-term “hedge” but you appear to indicate that the United States will not be able to meet its arms reductions commitments in the near future: “we retain hedge warheads in large part due to the inability of either today’s nuclear infrastructure, *or the infrastructure we expect to have when the stockpile reductions are fully implemented in 2012*, to manufacture, in a timely way, warheads for replacement or for force augmentation, or to act to correct unexpected technical problems.” Do you believe the United States will be able to meet its obligations under the Moscow Treaty and the Nonproliferation Treaty to pursue meaningful reductions?
- If the RRW is to lead to additional reductions in our stockpile when will we see significant increases in funds requested for warhead dismantlement?
- If the RRW adds to the reliability and lifespan of our current arsenal, is the Modern Pit Facility contemplated by the Administration still appropriate or will it be pared down?

I look forward to your timely response to these questions.

Sincerely,



Ellen O. Tauscher
Member of Congress